

Dear Members of Labor and Public Employees Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Cristher Estrada-Perez, and I live in Hartford, Connecticut. I support Senate Bill No. 1178: *An Act Expanding Connecticut Paid Sick Days* and H.B. 6859 *An Act Concerning Predictable Scheduling*.

As a person who has had her fair share of sick days, living with chronic asthma, I know the importance of having paid sick time that protects you from losing wages due to illness. Workers who get sick or are chronically ill should not have to choose between paying their bills or taking care of their health and the health of their families. This is important when nearly 7 in 10 of the lowest wage workers nationally, who are disproportionately women and people of color, do not have access to even a single paid sick day.

This is especially true for low-income residents who live in environmental sacrificial zones that often exacerbate chronic illness. "Sacrificial zones are areas where residents are subjected to heightened pollution levels and hazardous materials, despite the adverse impacts on their health. They are part of a legacy of environmental racism and environmental injustice that has resulted in people of color being significantly more likely than white people to experience polluted air and groundwater" which in turn impact their health. For example, in the state of Connecticut like in other states across the country, asthma disproportionately affects Black and latine populations with 13% of Black adults, 21% of Latine adults, and only 11% of white adults suffering from asthma. However, it is not just a racial justice issue, economics plays a big part, with only 6% of adults in wealthy towns having asthma, while 16% of adults in cities like New Haven, Waterbury, Hartford, and Bridgeport.¹

Asthma is only one of the many conditions that can impact workers ability to go to work. What we need to consider here is the inherent humanity in all of us. Humans get sick, that is just a fact of life, and we all need the space and financial freedom to take care of our health and the health of our families. What we need to ask ourselves is what message are we sending to sick and chronically ill people if we don't pass a paid sick days policy outlined in Senate Bill No. 1178: *An Act Expanding Connecticut Paid Sick Days*?

According to the CDC, 60% of Americans are living with a chronic illness. That means that 60% of American workers need to paid sick days on the first day of employment. I strongly support the expansion of paid sick days in our state as outlined in this bill to cover all workers, eliminate the waiting period, include all types of family structures and relationships, and protect against future pandemics.

I hope the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote favorably this year to strengthen Connecticut's paid sick days law.

Thank you for your time,
Cristher Estrada Perez Hartford, CT

¹ <https://ctmirror.org/2022/10/28/ct-asthma-diagnosis-race-economics-environment/>